

Message Text

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43

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7630

S E C R E T KINSHASA 3555

PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.), CG

SUBJECT: THE MOOD IN ZAIRE

REFERENCE: STATE 099043, TOSEC 110030

1. US-ZAIRIAN RELATIONS HAVE IMPROVED VASTLY SINCE THE LOW POINT IN JUNE 1975 WHEN OUR AMBASSADOR WAS PNG'D AND THE SAFETY OF AMERICAN RESIDENTS WAS THREATENED IN ONE OF KINSHASA'S SEMI-OFFICIAL NEWSPAPERS. THE BASIC REASON FOR THIS IMPROVEMENT IS THAT MOBUTU HAS REALIZED HOW MUCH HE NEEDS US, IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ANGOLAN WAR AND AS HE FACES A DEEPENING ECONOMIC CRISIS. AT THE SAME TIME OUR OWN HEIGHTENED INTEREST IN ZAIRE HAS BEEN EVIDENT TO MOBUTU, AND HE APPRECIATES IT. WE ENJOY GOOD ACCESS TO THE ZAIRIAN LEADERSHIP.

2. MOBUTU IS NOW BEGINNING WHAT MAY WELL BE HIS MOST DIFFICULT PERIOD OF LEADERSHIP. THE REFORMS WHICH ARE NECESSARY FOR ZAIRIAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY WILL SOON BEGIN TO SQUEEZE THE ALREADY PINCHED LIFE STYLES OF ZAIRE'S URBAN POPULATION. ZAIRE HAS BEEN LIVING ON A HAND-TO-MOUTH BASIS FOR THE LAST YEAR AND SUPPLIES OF CRITICAL FOOD AND FUEL HAVE BEEN TENUOUS. LACK OF SPARE PARTS AND RAW
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MATERIALS HAS THREATENED TO CLOSE DOWN THE IMPORTANT INDUSTRIES SUCH AS THE COTTON TEXTILE MILLS WHICH ARE SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYERS OF URBAN WORKERS. IN THIS RESPECT, SIGNATURE DURING YOUR VISIT OF THE PL-480 AGREEMENT FOR THE SUPPLY OF COTTON WOULD BE A

TIMELY INDICATION OF CONTINUED US ASSISTANCE FOR ZAIRE.

3. AS A RESULT OF ZAIRE'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, WHICH IMPACT HARDEST ON THE URBAN WAGE EARNER, THERE IS GROWING POPULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH MOBUTU. WE HAVE RECEIVED A TRICKLE OF CRITICAL COMMENTS (PRIMARILY FROM THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY) TO THE EFFECT THAT US SUPPORT FOR MOBUTU AMOUNTS TO PROPPING UP A NEARLY DEFUNCT REGIME. WE HAVE HEARD NO CRITICISM OF THE VISIT ITSELF, AND WE EXPECT NO DISTURBANCES THAT WOULD IMPINGE UPON THE SECRETARY'S VISIT.

4. FROM THE ZAIRIAN SIDE, THE VISIT WILL BE DOMINATED BY MOBUTU, NGUZA AND BISENGIMANA. IN OUR RECENT DISCUSSIONS OF THE VISIT, BISENGIMANA HAS REAFFIRMED THAT THE GOZ WILL FOCUS ON ITS TWO PREOCCUPATIONS: ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE. RE THE FORMER, MOBUTU CAN BE EXPECTED TO REVIEW THE GOZ'S OWN EFFORTS TO GET THROUGH THE CURRENT CRISIS, NOTABLY ITS STABILIZATION PROGRAM OF ECONOMIC/FINANCIAL REFORM AND BELT-TIGHTENING. MOBUTU WILL, OF COURSE, ASSESS THE PROBLEM IN TERMS OF ZAIRE BEING VICTIMIZED BY THE CONCURRENT PLUNGE OF WORLD COPPER PRICES AND THE STAGGERING INCREASES IN IMPORT COSTS, PARTICULARLY FOR OIL. HE WILL WANT TO KNOW WHAT MORE WE INTEND TO DO BY WAY OF BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS ASSISTANCE AND OTHER ECONOMIC/FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS. HE WILL ALSO BE INTERESTED IN OUR ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTS FOR GETTING THE SMTF COPPER PROJECT GOING AGAIN.

5. THIS WILL OFFER US THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW FOR MOBUTU IN GENERAL TERMS THE STATUS OF CURRENT (\$60 MILLION) PROGRAM FOR FY-76 AND GIVE HIM SOME IDEA OF WHAT WE HOPE TO DO NEXT FISCAL YEAR. HE WILL NOT EXPECT--AND WE DO NOT RECOMMEND--ANY DETAILED DISCUSSION OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. MOBUTU HAS NEVER SHOWN MUCH INTEREST IN OR UNDERSTANDING OF ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. THESE ARE BETTER LEFT FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN BISENGIMANA AND DEPUTY SECRETARY ROBINSON DURING THEIR MEETING SCHEDULED LATER IN THE DAY.

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6. MOBUTU WILL PROBABLY WANT TO SPEND MORE TIME REVIEWING ZAIRE'S SECURITY NEEDS. HERE HE WILL EXPAND ON THE THREAT POSED TO ZAIRE'S SECURITY AND ECONOMY BY THE ARMS BUILD-UP IN NEIGHBORING ANGOLA AND CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE) AND BY THE SPREAD OF COMMUNIST-BACKED OR INFLUENCED REGIMES ELSEWHERE ON THE CONTINENT. HE WILL ATTEMPT TO SHOW HOW THIS CHANGING BALANCE OF POWER THREATENS NOT ONLY ZAIRE AND OTHER MODERATES BUT US INTERESTS ON THE CONTINENT AS WELL. HE WILL STRESS THE URGENT NEED FOR INCREASED US MILITARY AID, REFERRING TO THE PRIORITIES HE LISTED DURING DEPUTY SECRETARY ROBINSON'S PREVIOUS VISIT AND EXPRESSING GREAT EXPECTATIONS FROM GENERAL ROCKWELL'S FORTHCOMING MISSION TO ZAIRE.

7. HERE I THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO PROVIDE MOBUTU WITH OUR OWN ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET/CUBAN STRATEGY AND INTENTIONS IN AFRICA AND SOME IDEA OF HOW WE INTEND TO DEAL WITH THIS INCREASING MENACE TO OUR MUTUAL INTERESTS. IN THIS REGARD IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO REMIND MOBUTU THAT, BEYOND THE CONSIDERABLE ASSISTANCE ALREADY EXTENDED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF OUR COMMON ANGOLAN EFFORT, WE HAVE INCREASED OUR FMS PROGRAM THIS FISCAL YEAR SIX TIMES WHAT IT WAS LAST YEAR (\$3.5 TO 19 MILLION) AND THAT WE HOPE TO INCREASE IT EVEN MORE NEXT YEAR. (MOBUTU IS AWARE OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S PLANS TO SEEK \$28 MILLION--AND PERHAPS MORE--FOR FY-77). IF, AS IS LIKELY, MOBUTU CITES THE INJECTION OF MIGS INTO THE AREA TO JUSTIFY HIS REQUEST FOR US JET FIGHTERS AND SOPHISTICATED AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS, WE CAN SUGGEST THAT THIS AND SIMILAR QUESTIONS BE REVIEWED WHEN ROCKWELL COMES. WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL, HOWEVER, NOT TO LEAD MOBUTU INTO EXPECTING MORE THAN WE CAN EVENTUALLY DELIVER. IT WOULD NOT HURT, FOR EXAMPLE, TO START QUESTIONING NOW THE FEASIBILITY AND NEED FOR SUCH ITEMS AS A-4 FIGHTERS, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE GOZ IS ALREADY BUYING FROM THE FRENCH A FULL SQUADRON OF MIRAGES. BUT WE MIGHT EXPLORE OTHER WAYS BY WHICH THE US CAN DEMONSTRATE ITS SUPPORT OF ZAIRE'S SECURITY IN THE FACE OF SOVIET/CUBA CHALLENGE.

8. MOBUTU'S OBSESSION WITH HIS OWN IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS HAS PRECLUDED MUCH DISCUSSION OF BROADER ISSUES, SUCH AS SOUTHERN AFRICA, SINCE MY ARRIVAL HERE. HE IS, OF COURSE, FIRMLY ON PUBLIC RECORD AS ARDENTLY SUPPORTING THE LIBERATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, AND I SUSPECT IN THE POST-ANGOLA PERIOD HE SEES AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFURBISH HIS IMAGE IN AFRICAN CIRCLES BY
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PLAYING A MORE PROMINENT ROLE IN SUPPORT OF RADICAL SOLUTIONS. HOWEVER, ANY SUCH TEMPTATION IS TEMPERED BY THE REALITY THAT ZAIRE, WITH ITS DEPENDENCE ON TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION ROUTES TO THE SOUTH, HAS MUCH TO LOSE BY THE IMPLANTATION OF POTENTIALLY HOSTILE REGIMES, NOTABLY IN RHODESIA. BISENGIMANA MAKES NO BONES ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO ZAIRE AND HAS REPEATEDLY URGED THAT WE MOVE QUICKLY TO HELP ESTABLISH MODERATE BUFFER REGIMES IN BOTH RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA. NGUZA, WHILE SHARING BISENGIMANA'S AVERSION TO THE RADICALS, IS CHARGED WITH PRESERVING AND PROMOTING MOBUTU'S PLACE AS AN AFRICAN/THIRD WORLD LEADER AND HE IS THEREFORE MORE CAREFUL IN APPROACHING THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUE. MOBUTU SEEMS TO FALL SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE TWO: HE IS PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF WORKING AGAINST FORCES HE VIEWS AS POSING A POTENTIAL THREAT TO HIS OWN SECURITY (I.E., COMMUNIST-SUPPORTED "PROGRESSIVE" FORCES), BUT ONLY IN SUCH WAYS AS HIS HAND IS NOT REVEALED TO THE FURTHER DETRIMENT OF HIS CREDENTIALS AS A "NON-ALIGNED" LEADER.

9. LASTLY, IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE GOZ, FROM MOBUTU DOWN, PUTS GREAT STORE BY THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. NO OTHER FOREIGN MINISTER HAS RECEIVED THE KIND OF ATTENTION THAT WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SECRETARY. IT SHOULD BE NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT THE

DECISION TO LODGE THE SECRETARY AT THE MARBLE PALACE IS A FIRST,
SINCE THAT GUEST HOUSE IS RESERVED FOR CHIEFS OF STATE OR
HEADS OF GOVERNMENT.
CUTLER

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